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Submitted by Dave Eitland

New Y Tennis

"I can't wait for the New Y tennis courts to be built!"

That sentiment has been echoed frequently throughout the Grand Traverse Bay community, but never more fervently than by Paul Bandrowski, coach of the S.E.A.S. junior high tennis teams, Team Tennis chair of the Northern Michigan Tennis Association, and father of five competitive players.

"The Y really needs more indoor courts," adds Bandrowski, "and we need them now."

Try calling the Y for court time on most any Wednesday during the winter and you'll see what he means. The Y has regularly scheduled lessons, leagues, and contract time in reserve from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm, leaving only two available open court-hours all day long. The rest of the week is not much different.

At least a portion of the Y's tennis program success is attributable to strong teaching professionals who have trained a core group of top Midwest players. YMCA CEO Tom Van Deinse was head tennis pro at The Homestead in Glen Arbor for 17 summers before joining the Y team, and sons Joseph and James have followed his tennis footsteps, doing the bulk of tennis instruction between tournaments while they strive to break into the professional tour themselves.

"I like to brag that I once beat a guy who beat Pete Sampras," says Van Deinse, "I've played exhibition tennis with Ken Rosewall (former world #1), and I had a great result just a few years ago against Eric Butorac, who made it to the semi-finals of this year's Australian Open in doubles. But I know I'm a better teacher than player, and Joseph and James are better than me."

"Just don't tell them I said that," he jokes.

Besides doubling capacity (the New Y will boast six indoor tennis courts, versus the current Y's three), the New Y tennis facility will

have a lot to add to the entire region. "I've seen the New Y tennis plans, and they're awesome," says Bandrowski. "Courtside seating, ample viewing area, and even a built-in mini-stadium will all make for a great venue for regional tournaments, high school tennis, and league play."

The tennis facilities are just one piece of the New Y project to be constructed at the site of the former buffalo farm on Silver Lake Road, just south of West Junior High, and west of the Great Wolf Lodge and the Horizon Outlet Mall. A competition pool, zero depth entry splash pad, training pool, and hot tub spa will comprise the aquatic center, and a generous second floor health and fitness center will round out the major functional areas of the first phase of construction of the New Y.

"To top it all off," adds Van Deinse, "the current facility off of South Airport will continue to be used for gyms, a field house, and expanded pickleball offerings. "Pickleball is a popular sport like mini-tennis, played with a paddle and whiffle ball. It is currently played on the Y's three indoor courts, but with construction of the New Y, twice that many pickleball courts will become available at the Y's current site.

Tennis currently accounts for 40% of the Y's membership, and is its largest revenue generating program. Van Deinse estimates that even with twice the number of courts, the New Y tennis facility will stay as busy as the current Y. "Between the Bandrowskis, Shoults', Cooleys, Holmes, Schaefer and other top ranked juniors we're seeing, YMCA tennis will remain strong - and busy - for years to come."

"But we've got to get it built now!" concludes Bandrowski.

For more information about the New Y tennis or other facilities, or to view plans and renderings, visit www.gtbayymca.org or call the Y at 933-9622.